

Interesting Results of Mrs. Reggie Vanderbilt's Match-Making

When Mrs. Claire Knight Colford, "The Million-Dollar Bud" Is Set Free from the Man Her Dear Friend Cathleen Picked for Her Fashionable Society Expects an Important New Mating of Four Social Leaders



Mrs. Sidney Colford, Jr., Formerly Miss Claire Knight, the "Million Dollar Bud" and one of the Principals in a Most Interesting Divorce Suit.



Mrs. Reggie Vanderbilt (Now Divorced), Who Made the Colford Match Which Has Fashionable Society Gossips Turned Out So Oddly for Herself



Mr. Sidney Colford.

BLESSED are the peacemakers, it is said in the Beatitudes, according to St. Matthew, but nowhere in Scriptural history is there any reference, good or bad, to the matchmakers. This omission is, without shadow of doubt, perplexing, for matchmaking has been an acknowledged occupation of women as long as history runs. Even in the proverbs and wise sayings of all races we find no gems of epigram that give the matchmakers a definite place in the scheme of things.

This may be because there can be no real definite judgment upon the success of their efforts—even when they are apparently good or apparently bad. Who can tell what factors which could not possibly be known by the matchmaker made them turn out miserably? And who can tell, equally, what similarly unknown factors made them successful?

It is the filing of the divorce suit of Mrs. Sidney Colford, one of the most charming and courted belles of New York, Newport and Philadelphia fashionable society, which raises these philosophic thoughts and presents the latest and most interesting for years of matchmaking problems. For no less a person than Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt herself admittedly made the match between the beautiful Claire Knight and the dashing Sidney Colford. It was she, too, who brought together Mr. Philip Potter, nephew of the distinguished Bishop Potter, and the charming and fashionable Frances Downing, and the announcement of this engagement was made in her own home at Newport.

While this latter does not seem on the surface to be apropos of Mrs. Colford's divorce suit, rumor in fashionable society links it very strongly, for it is the prediction of this same fashionable society that when Mrs. Colford is divorced from the husband that her dear friend Cathleen selected for her, Mrs. Vanderbilt herself will marry Mr. Colford, while the present Mrs. Colford will become the bride of Mr. Francis Potter, brother of Mr. Philip Potter, whom Mrs. Vanderbilt picked out for her other close friend, Miss Downing!

By this it will be seen how really very amazing it is that no general conclusions have ever been drawn about matchmakers when such interesting results as those in this case can occur, no matter how infrequently.

Once again, too, real life proves that unlimited wealth does not insure us against too limited happiness. It was only a few years ago that Mrs. Colford, the "Million Dollar Bud," only daughter and heiress of Edward C. Knight, the Philadelphia sugar king—so-called because her doting father had announced upon her debut that he would spend a million dollars upon her to make her a happy debutante and another million to make her a happy bride—was the most discussed debutante in Newport society. A little later she was the most discussed bride; and now she is the most discussed young matron, and it would seem that her great wealth and Mrs. Vanderbilt's propensity for matchmaking are responsible for it.

Now that what for five years has seemed the inevitable has actually happened, society, Janus-faced, is looking both backward and forward. And correctly to understand the present amazing situation a slight resume of Mrs. Colford's career must be given. For after all, the foundations of the rumors and gossip now prevalent were laid several years ago, when her parents were grooming her for her social pre-eminence.

Some fourteen years ago the Edward Knights arrived in Newport fresh from an expensive and successful season at Monte Carlo and other Riviera resorts. The Knight wealth was breath-taking even for Newport, but in the beginning the Poo-Bahs took them rather coldly. When, however, they bought a large plot of land fronting on the cliffs and running through to Bellevue avenue, society had a change of heart.

Almost by magic a veritable fairy palace appeared upon that site. More than a million dollars was spent on the place, and it was all to be the setting, so the Knights said, for their only daughter, Claire, who would make her debut there. Before that, of course, there must be a coming-out in Philadelphia. And of that coming-out ball, the Quaker City talked for many seasons. It cost many thousands of dollars, and rivaled in expensive sensations anything ever given in that city.

In discussing the ball, Mr. Knight said, "I have already spent a million dollars to make my daughter a happy debutante and I am willing to spend another million to make her a happy bride. My money will all go to Claire, anyway, so I'm going to

spend all I can for her while she is young and can enjoy it."

Naturally, Mr. Knight could not read the future and foresee what was in store for his only child. Just after her debut, her uncle died, making her his heiress and thus she came into a special fortune estimated at twenty million dollars. With this fortune in hand, another in the future and her beautiful Summer home on the cliffs, Miss Knight speedily became the pet of the Newport colony.

Suitors sprang up on all sides, men of wealth and social prestige besieged her, and so did many others of no fortunes at all.

But at eighteen, Claire Knight lost her heart to the most financially impossible of all of them and would pay no attention to the Desirables who fluttered about her. Her choice was Sidney Colford, Jr., only son of Sidney Jones Colford, one-time Newport gallant and husband of the beautiful Edith Chartrand. The Colfords were identified with the old Newport set. Sidney was a great favorite with men and the young married women, and his beautiful sister, Edith Colford, was a great belle.

While every one made a great pet of young Sidney, he was not taken seriously as a matrimonial possibility, and Claire Knight's devotion to him roused considerable comment, as also did Cathleen Vanderbilt's (Mrs. Reggie) engineering of the romance. Mr. Knight, albeit still willing to spend his fortune to make his daughter happy, did not feel that young Colford could. He did everything possible to break up the romance. When Miss Claire's first season ended her parents took her abroad, hoping that a Monte Carlo visit would cure her, but, separated from the youth she adored, the lovely girl failed steadily in health until the doctors whispered that she might die of a broken heart!

Feeling that at least while there was life there was hope, the Knights returned to Philadelphia, summoned young Mr. Colford to a conference and then announced the engagement.

The wedding took place almost immediately, and, safe in the possession of a large fortune and a husband she loved, the bride speedily regained her health and vivacity. In recalling this desperate love affair society now finds it difficult indeed to realize that not only is the wife's name being coupled with that of another man, but that the husband is also credited with being eager to marry a very prominent divorcee in the Newport set.

But truth is ever as strong as fiction, and sometimes more so.

Following their marriage, the young Colfords continued close friends of the "Reggie" Vanderbilts. In fact, the two men had been pals since their boyhood, and the two wives, of course, had been tremendous friends all along. The four some went everywhere together; but after a time society heard that the Colfords were estranged; later it heard the same thing of the Vanderbilts, but nothing openly happened for a year or two. Then it became apparent that Mr. Vanderbilt had dropped out, leaving a trio and this trio has lasted to the present moment.

"Ah," whispered society, hearing in time of the separation of the Vanderbilts, and seeing Mrs. Vanderbilt constantly with the Colfords, "Cathleen is doing her best to patch up things between her two dear friends." And, as a matter of fact, time and again when the Colford ménage neared dangerous reefs, Mrs. Reggie

stepped into the breach and smoothed things over.

During these years Mr. Knight was lavish with money and affection for his daughter and with intense bitterness for his son-in-law. But Colford, because of his lack of wealth, was in no position to resent his father-in-law's attitude and five years ago hints of a divorce began to be made. Then the Colford's second child was born at the Vanderbilt Hotel and society decided that everything was fairly smooth once again.

This period of public peace continued a few months, when another estrangement took place, which lasted until Sidney Colford went to France as an ambulance driver. Society, always wise, said, "Now that Sidney is proving himself so brave, Claire will make up with him." And in a way she did, for the night before he sailed for overseas she gave a dinner for him at the Vanderbilt, with Mrs. "Reggie" Vanderbilt as her second guest of honor.

When America joined the fight Colford was transferred to the Marine Corps, saw a good deal of action, and won decided honors for heroism. While he was overseas Mrs. Vanderbilt and Mrs. Colford continued their intimacy, everything pointing to a lasting reconciliation between the husband and wife. Then the armistice came and Colford returned.

The night of his arrival Mrs. Colford gave a welcoming dinner for him, with the same guests who had attended the going away feast.

All parties concerned in this interesting situation have been on the most friendly terms. Those who have gossiped about disagreements between Mr. and Mrs. Colford have been perplexed by the fact that the husband, the wife and their friends have all continued with most cordial relations. Society has been puzzled. One question asked quite frequently is why, if a divorce was about to be begun, the disagreeing couple should go so far in travel efforts to keep up appearances as to travel together on various occasions with every evidence of amiable companionship.

Last Summer when Mrs. Colford had her friend, Mrs. Alice Potter Adams, married to Charles Martin in her home in Connecticut, Mr. Colford was listed among those present. Later, when Philip Potter married Frances Downing in Boston, Mrs. Colford, Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Martin, Francis Potter and Sidney Colford arrived in Boston and put up at the same hotel. It was this Boston visit particularly that lulled the gossips and caught them napping in the end. Four months after this Boston trip Mrs. Colford entered suit for absolute divorce on the grounds of desertion and cruelty, asking for the custody of her two small daughters.

Thus far the results of looking backward. Now to look forward.

Fashionable society sees Mrs. Colford a charming, young and wealthy divorcee. It sees her besieged with suitors, much as she was as a debutante. Being young and desirable, there can be, of course, little reason to expect her to live the rest of her life in single blessedness. There is absolutely no reason, morally or legally,

why she should. Society rubs its glasses and peers forth to discover, if possible, whether any one man rather than another might be singled out. In the words of the fortune teller, a haze obscures the possibilities, but one figure stands out somewhat clearer than the others—Francis Potter, an older brother of Mrs. Colford's close friend, Alice Potter Martin.

This, is, indeed, interesting, for Mr. Potter has kept rather in the background where women are concerned, since his pretty Baltimore wife got her divorce. He is a good-looking, upstanding person, nephew of the late Bishop Potter, and formerly connected with the diplomatic corps. He left diplomacy, which is never a lucrative job, and joined the staff of a large New York department store. If his now hazy figure should become more clear following Mrs. Colford's divorce society would not be at all astonished.

Then, of course, there is Mr. Colford's future to be studied. Here, again, there can be no reason for him to remain a bachelor, or should we say grass widower? Young, with a reputation for courage obtained by his war service, and blessed with a fairly settled income, Mr. Colford certainly can find a mate for his future years. Gossip says right out loud that he will not have far to seek and openly couples his name with that of Mrs. Vanderbilt. Even in its frankness society for once has the grace to be astonished over this problematical match, for there have been so many obstacles to overcome by the lady and so many parallels to Mrs. Colford's own romance.

Mrs. Reggie, like Mrs. Colford, was so desperately in love with her girlhood's lover, Reggie Vanderbilt, that she almost died of a broken heart when the match

was first opposed. Later they were married, and eventually their lives ran along the same lines as the Colfords'. When a separation came, Mrs. Reggie, because of her religion, refused to get a divorce. Not until last Summer, five years after the separation, did she nerve herself to the point of entering suit. With this step taken Mrs. Vanderbilt, legally, is free to marry again. She, like Mrs. Colford, is young, wealthy and in every way desirable.

And if this comes about, as society believes it will, it will be most truly an astonishing result of the former Mrs. Vanderbilt's matchmaking proclivities. How, seeing that the man she picked for her dear friend Claire failed to keep her love, can Mrs. Vanderbilt feel sure that he can retain hers? And how, seeing unquestionably that her girl friend could not keep Mr. Colford's heart, can she be sure that she can hold it?

Aha! none can say. Only the future can bring the answer.